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ABSTRACT

Communication effectiveness and its dependence on factors of leadership behavior, leader background, organizational structure, and organizational age in Illinois Public Junior Colleges are the concerns of this study. Data were obtained through questionnaires sent to full-time faculty members and institutional administrators in the Illinois 2-year public institutions. These questionnaires contained typical hypothetical situations in which communication problems might arise, and asked for each respondent's opinions concerning the probability and nature of any resulting communication. Variables were then statistically correlated in several combinations. Some of the more significant results indicate that organizational characteristics such as size, chain of command, and division of labor may inhibit an atmosphere of effective communication between superordinate and subordinate; and that an individual's previous training and experience may not be as relatively important a factor as was previously thought, when judging his potential for leadership and communication. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (JO)

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEADER FACTORS TO COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS IN ILLINOIS PUBLIC JUNIOR COLLEGES

A paper presented to the 1970 Annual Meeting of the
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OBJECTIVE OF AND SUPPORT FOR THE STUDY

At some point in time nearly every individual has attributed at least a portion of society's problems to "a lack of" or "a breakdown in" communications. If one accepts the premise that desirable societal relationships depend on man's understanding of and subsequent respect for fellow man, and if one further agrees that "understanding" is what communication is all about, then even such a sweeping generalization is difficult to challenge.

Obviously, it was not the intent of this study to discover any relationship of general societal ills to communication effectiveness. However, the study did focus on one segment of society - formal educational institutions - and consider factors related to communication effectiveness in that setting. A survey of the literature yielded two rather consistently related factors - those involving (1) the organizational structure and (2) the leader.

It became apparent after surveying research and other literature relating to organizational structure that educational organizations possess many characteristics normally designated as bureaucratic, in the Weberian sense. Attesting to this fact are Hartley (1966), Lane (1967), Saunders and Lovell (1969), Moeller and Charters (1966), and Corwin (1963). Substantiating the fact that a relationship exists between an organization's bureaucratic structure and its communication difficulties are Davis (1967), Read (Barnlund, 1968), Rosengren (1964), Barnard (1960), Meyer (1968), Indik (1965), Rowe (1966), and Scott (1963). It became further apparent that educational institutions are among those institutions possessing some

rather unique structural problems - not the least of which is the structuring of individuals with similar expertise into positions of superordination and subordination. Such a relationship apparently further confounds the usual communication problems. Alluding to this peculiar problem are Culbertson (Harris, 1963) who discusses the problem as it relates to hospital personnel and Lane (1967) who considers the situation as it relates to school personnel.

Substantiating the fact that an organization's formal leader has a significant role in establishing an effective communication climate are Barnard (1960), Davis (1967), Culbertson (1960), Simon (1961), Likert (Lane, 1967), and Lipham (1964).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND ITS LIMITATIONS

This study treated the two sets of factors just discussed (organizational and leader factors) as independent variables and utilized a measure of communication "effectiveness" as the dependent variable.

Two leadership behavior variables, six leader background variables, two organizational structure variables, and one variable concerning the age of the organization were singularly correlated with the dependent variable by the Pearson Product-Moment method and entered into a forward solution multiple regression calculation - both in mass and in various combinations. In addition various restricted models were combined with other restricted models (see attachment #1) to determine whether any increment in predictive power was achieved and, if so, whether it was significant. Finally, the significant single variables were tested for

the independence of their relationship with the dependent variable by partial correlation t-tests.

Measurement

A search for a measure of communication effectiveness, the dependent variable, proved to be unsuccessful. It thus became necessary to construct such an instrument. This instrument was called the Communications Effectiveness Questionnaire (CEQ). It was based on a theoretical model presented by David Berlo (1960) which considers communication as being behavioristic - that is, communication is a stimulus which, if it is effective, will elicit an overt or covert response in accordance with its intent. Situations judged by an expert jury as being "typical" of those affecting or involving junior colleges and their personnel were presented in questionnaire form to randomly selected full-time faculty members of Illinois public junior colleges as stimuli. The subjects were then asked to respond by indicating (1) the probability of communication being initiated by their administrators as a result of the situations, (2) the probability that such a communication would be received by them, (3) the nature of any such communication, and (4) their own response to the communication. It should be noted that the use of actual rather than hypothetical situations would enhance the validity of the instrument. However, such use would be feasible only if considering one or a few institutions.

One class of independent variable, that involving the leader and his behavior, was measured by indices of the leader's training and

experience and by the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) respectively. (The latter was sent to a sample of respondents different from that of the CEQ.) The other class of independent variable, that involving the organization and its structure, was measured by indices of size, administrative-faculty ratios, and the ages of the various campuses. Indices not collected through the CEQ or LBDQ were obtained through a short, direct answer questionnaire sent directly to the presidents and/or through published documents.

Assumptions

The validity of the study hinges on the following assumptions:

1. The president is visible to instructors.
2. The president is the principal decision-maker and therefore controls the tenor of administrator communications to faculty.

Limitations

Limitations which seemed evident in this study are:

1. Since many of the public junior colleges in Illinois are in their beginning stages of development, the organizational and leadership factors, as well as communication patterns, may not have been well established in those colleges.
2. Public junior colleges in Illinois, being mostly emergent, are deluged with questionnaires and, as a result,

a sizable portion of the personnel either refused to reply or may have done so hurriedly and/or with negative feelings.

3. Results of the study may be generalized to only the population of Illinois public junior colleges and their personnel.

Definition of Terms

The following terms, used in this study, need further clarification:

Communication Effectiveness

This concept is operationally defined as being present when a message is (1) sent, (2) received, (3) interpreted, and (4) responded to in accordance with the desired intent of the transmitter.

Initiating Structure

This is one of the two dimensions purportedly measured by the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) developed by the Personnel Research Board of the Ohio State University to assess perceptions of a person's leadership behavior. It refers to the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and the members of his group in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communications, and ways of getting the job done. A leader displaying this characteristic is concerned with organizational goals or the task to be accomplished.

Consideration

This is the other of the two dimensions purportedly isolated by

the LBDQ. It refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth of relationship between the leader and members of the group. A leader displaying this characteristic is concerned with individual goals or the interpersonal relations aspect of his work.

Full-Time Faculty

"Full-time" in this study refers to faculty members who devote one-half or more time to instruction (if they have other institutional duties) or who teach at least six class hours per week (if they have only teaching duties).

President

This title, as used in this study, refers to the chief administrator of a campus. Although usually given the title "president," he is occasionally given another title such as "administrative dean" on branch campuses.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings were judged tenable as a result of the study (see attachment #2 for statistical bases of interpretations):

1. The size of the junior college campus was found to be significantly related (in a negative manner) to the effectiveness of communications between superordinates and subordinates on that campus.
2. The Consideration dimension of leadership behavior, as measured by the LBDQ, was found to be significantly

related (in a positive manner) to the effectiveness of the leader's (or leader initiated) communications.

3. The two significant variables listed above were found to be separately and independently related to communication effectiveness.

4. When individual variables were combined, only those concerning the organization and its structure were significantly related (at the statistical level designated) to the effectiveness of communication in that organization. In these combinations the relationship (negative) can be attributed largely to a single variable - size of the campus.

5. Leader background factors, individually and in combination, were found to have no significant relationship to the effectiveness of that leader's communications.

6. All variables in combination proved to be significantly related to the subordinate-superordinate communications, indicating that organizational and leader factors are indeed significant predictors of such a process in institutions of this type. When entered by the forward solution multiple regression method, two variables, (1) the size of the campus and (2) the Consideration dimension of the chief administrator's leadership behavior emerged as the highest and next highest predictors respectively and contributed 36.4 per cent to the total 58.5 per cent predictive power of the entire model.

7. When various restricted models were expanded to form fuller models, a determination as to whether the addition of a variable (s) to an existing variable (s) added significantly to the predictive power of the original model indicated that only the addition of organizational factors to leader factors was significant.

CONCLUSIONS - IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The positive implications of this study appear to be primarily twofold:

1. The size of an institution, with its accompanying rationality, chain of command, division of labor, and other related "bureaucratic" characteristics, may create an atmosphere of impersonality inhibitory to "effective" communications. It seems apparent that steps need to be taken to break down or transcend this structure in some manner if communications between superordinates and subordinates are to be effective.
2. An administrative leader may expect to improve communications with his subordinates by effecting considerate, empathetic leadership behavior in relating to them.

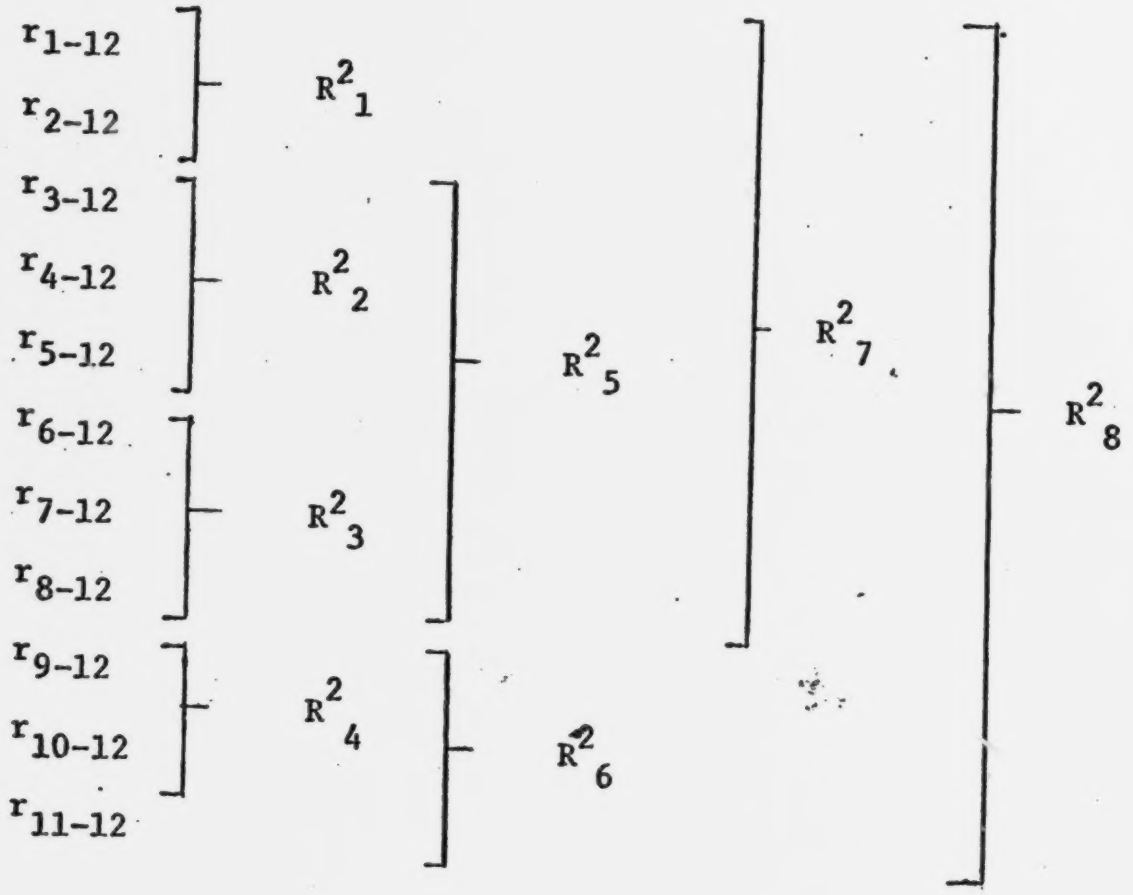
In a negative sense, it seems reasonable to conclude that:

1. An administrator whose primary concern is <u>initiating structure</u> or "getting the job done" in an efficient manner may have difficulty in communicating with his subordinates and hence cannot be considered a totally effective leader.

2. The training and experience an administrator has had do not necessarily make him an effective communicator and leader. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that these factors alone should not receive the emphasis they currently receive when an administrator is being considered for a position of organizational leadership. This is not to imply that these factors are not important - it is only to imply that they alone may not be as important as they are often perceived to be. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to determine what qualities would be considered in selecting a leader, it seems reasonable to suggest (based on the findings of this study) that the quality of a genuine concern for and understanding of subordinates and their problems (not the least of which is their functional subordination to persons of essentially equal expertise) needs to be considered.

ATTACHMENT #1

SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE INCREMENTAL APPROACH USED IN DEVELOPING MULTIPLE R^2 MODELS



where:

Variable 1 = Initiating Structure
Variable 2 = Consideration
Variable 3 = Training in Educational Administration
Variable 4 = Training in Higher Education including the Jr. College
Variable 5 = Training in Junior College alone
Variable 6 = Experience in Educational Administration
Variable 7 = Experience in Higher Education, including the Jr. College
Variable 8 = Experience in the Junior College alone
Variable 9 = Size of the Junior College
Variable 10 = Administrator-Faculty Ratio
Variable 11 = Age of the Junior College
Variable 12 = Communication Effectiveness-the dependent variable

r = Pearson Product-Moment correlation

R^2 = Multiple correlation squared

Note: Variables 1 through 8 refer to the junior college president.

ATTACHMENT #2

Model Number	Model Description	Order of Predictor Variables	r	R	R^2	F-Ratio
1	r_{1-12}	-	.222	-	-	-
*2	r_{2-12}	-	.412[a]	-	-	-
3	r_{3-12}	-	.017	-	-	-
4	r_{4-12}	-	.073	-	-	-
5	r_{5-12}	-	-.200	-	-	-
6	r_{6-12}	-	-.030	-	-	-
7	r_{7-12}	-	.274	-	-	-
8	r_{8-12}	-	.210	-	-	-
*9	r_{9-12}	-	-.474[c]	-	-	-
10	r_{10-12}	-	-.058	-	-	-
11	r_{11-12}	-	-.234	-	-	-
12	R^2_1	(2,1)	-	.412	.170	2.866
13	R^2_2	(5,4,3)	-	.294	.086	.853
14	R^2_3	(7,8,6)	-	.280	.078	.763
15	R^2_4	(9,10)	-	.503	.253	4.739[a]
16	R^2_5	(7,5,4,6,3,8)	-	.375	.141	.655
17	R^2_6	(9,10,11)	-	.503	.253	3.052[a]
18	R^2_7	(2,7,5,3,6,8,1,4)	-	.569	.325	1.316
19	R^2_8	(9,2,5,7,10,6,3,8,4,11,1)	-	.765	.585	2.433[a]
20	R^2_7-R^2_1	-	-	-	-	.84
21	R^2_7-R^2_5	-	-	-	-	2.97
22	R^2_8-R^2_6	-	-	-	-	1.91
23	R^2_8-R^2_7	-	-	-	-	3.95[a]

*Partial correlations and subsequent t-tests on variables 2 and 9 showed -
when 2 was held constant; t-value = 2.82[c]
when 9 was held constant; t-value = 2.47[b]

a - significant at the .05 level
b - significant at the .02 level
c - significant at the .01 level

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